

REMARKS

In response to the Office Action dated February 9, 2006, please consider the preceding amendments and the following remarks made in a good faith attempt to move prosecution of this application forward to a proper allowance of the claims.

Please note that any and all fees associated with this response, including any applicable extension fees under 37 C.F.R. 1.136, and any fees for newly presented claims, may be charged to the deposit account of the undersigned, **Account No. 50-0894**.

Applicant here requests such extensions under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 as may be necessary to render this response timely.

Please note that claims 1-7, 9-10, 12-16, 18-21, 23, and 25 have been amended and do not contain new matter. As such, Applicant believes claims 1-16, 18-21, and 23-25 to be in condition for allowance.

Amendments to Claims

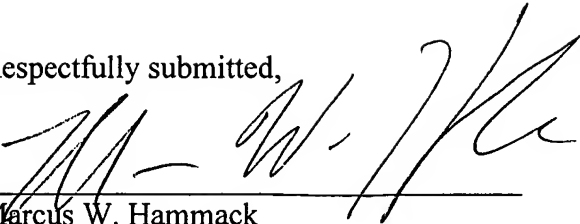
Claims 12, 18, and 23 are rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,675,855 to Culp. Applicant asserts that such rejection is inappropriate in light of amended claims 12, 18, and 23. The claims have been amended to require that the top and bottom of the foam support structure be in fluid communication with one another throughout the entire volume of the vacant regions when the foam material is in its relaxed state, that is without exterior forces acting upon it, as described in the original specification and figures. Original Figures 2-5. This is vital to the present invention to allow for the reduction in pressure points and stress on the body by allowing the edges of the vacant regions to “roll” inward allowing a “hammocking” effect as depicted in Figures 2-5. Additionally, the claims have been amended to

require that the membrane encasing the support structure only be sealed along the periphery of the structure. In contrast, Culp teaches vacant regions filled by a direct mechanical coupling between the top and bottom of the encasing members in order to stabilize and prevent pillowing of the top encasing member with respect to the bottom encasing member. Culp, Column 4, lines 10-14; Figures 3-4. This feature is required in Culp, but not in the present invention because of the differences in intended application of the respective inventions. That is, whereas Culp is intended to be inflated for use in camping, the present invention is intended to apply a slight vacuum to the device in order to resist the “fight back” of the foam itself (in regions of compression), resulting in less stress on the body. Therefore, because Culp does not teach or disclose the aforementioned elements and limitations, the present invention is not anticipated by Culp under 35 USC 102(b).

In addition, claims 1-2, 4-11, 21, and 24 currently stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Culp in view of other various prior art. Again, in light of the amended claims, and the aforementioned reasoning, Applicant asserts that such rejection is inappropriate.

Applicant respectfully submits, that in view of the preceding, Claims 1-16, 18-21, and 23-25 are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are hereby requested, and allowance of Claims 1-16, 18-21, and 23-25 at an early date is solicited. If impediments to allowance of the claims remain and a telephone conference between the undersigned and the examiner would help remove such impediments in the opinion of the Examiner, a telephone conference is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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